

1. (Amended) A method for communication employing a plurality of gatekeepers, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a request for information at a first gatekeeper;

determining whether the information is known by the first gatekeeper;

sending the request via at least one intermediate gatekeeper to a second gatekeeper if the information is not known by the first gatekeeper; and

receiving the requested information from the second gatekeeper via the at least one intermediate gatekeeper wherein a hierarchical level associated with said first gatekeeper is different from a hierarchical level associated with said intermediate gatekeeper.

2. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

storing the received information in at least one of the first, intermediate and second gatekeepers.

11. (Amended) An apparatus for communication, the apparatus comprising:

a processor; and

a memory coupled to said processor, said memory storing instructions adapted to be executed by said processor for performing the steps of:

receiving a request for information at a first gatekeeper;

determining whether the information is known by the first gatekeeper;

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sending the request via an intermediate gatekeeper to a second gatekeeper
if the information is not known by the first gatekeeper; and
receiving the requested information from the second gatekeeper via the
intermediate gatekeeper wherein a hierarchical level associated with said first
gatekeeper is different from a hierarchical level associated with said intermediate
gatekeeper.

12. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the instructions further perform
the step of:

storing the received information in at least one of the gatekeepers.

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21. (Amended) A medium for communications, the communication using a
plurality of gatekeepers at different hierarchical levels, said medium storing instructions
adapted to be executed by a processor for performing the steps of:

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receiving a request for information at a first gatekeeper;
determining whether the information is known by the first gatekeeper;
sending the request via an intermediate gatekeeper to a second gatekeeper if the
information is not known by the first gatekeeper; and
receiving the requested information from the second gatekeeper via the
intermediate gatekeeper wherein the first gatekeeper and the intermediate gatekeeper are
at different hierarchical levels.
